

LGA Leadership Board - Review of the Year 2015/16

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

The 2012 audit of the LGA's corporate governance arrangements recommended the introduction of an annual self-appraisal by the Boards to "reflect upon the preceding twelve months in terms of what has been achieved, progress against plan, what went well and lessons learnt".

This report summarises the work that the Leadership Board has undertaken since July 2015 to date, covering its main achievements from 97 decision items.

Recommendation

That the LGA Leadership Board reviews its work over the past year and its programme of meetings for 2016/2017, consider lessons learned and any improvements it would wish to make.

Action

Officers to take action in line with the Board's recommendations.

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Background

1. Under its terms of reference, the LGA Leadership Board's purpose is to develop the strategic priorities of the Association in consultation with member councils and the LGA Boards, and make recommendations to the LGA Executive. These priorities were set out in the July 2015 meeting and fall under four main themes: Devolution, Finance, Housing, and health and social care. The Board directs the LGA's business in line with these priorities, and has held the boards to account throughout the year.

Spending Review

2. The Leadership Board considered the LGA's formal submission to the 2015 Spending Review process which set out the planned work programme of engagement and media work throughout the autumn. The Board made a series of recommendations for the LGA's lobbying line which resulted in some key wins in the November 25th Spending Review Statement.

Business Rates Retention

3. Following the announcement that local government would retain 100% of business rates by 2020, the Leadership Board agreed to establish a Member task group to oversee this work. The Board agreed that officers should work jointly with the DCLG to engage with the sector on evidence gathering, fact finding, consideration of options for transferring services, and ensuring all relevant matters are taken into account in the design of the new system. This work is subject to oversight by the Task Group, and periodic reviews to ensure it remains in the best interest of Local Government.

Housing and Planning Bill

4. The Leadership Board welcomed the creation of a Housing Commission in response to its own policy priorities set in July 2015. The Housing Commission would cover: house building; place shaping and community building; employment and social mobility; and health and an ageing population.
5. The Leadership Board endorsed and shaped the LGA's lobbying lines which culminated in a series of amendments to the Housing and Planning Bill designed to mitigate against some of the negative impacts of the Bill on Local Government.

Devolution

6. The Leadership Board commissioned the development of a Green Paper, setting out Local Government's vision for devolution and making the case for a more extensive devolution of funding and powers than has been achieved to date. The paper was launched at the LGA's 2016 Annual Conference.

7. The Leadership Board agreed changes to the LGA's structures and services to reflect Combined Authorities as recommended by the Combined Authorities Working Group, including: that the purpose and terms of reference of the City Regions and People and Places Boards are reviewed and updated; that from September 2016 membership of those boards is amended to give Combined Authorities formal representation; that the LGA put in place with immediate effect a targeted improvement offer for Combined Authorities; that the LGA actively engages with serious mayoral candidates in order to convince them at an early stage of the benefits of working with the LGA.

Transport

8. The Leadership Board endorsed the ongoing work of the Economy, Environment, Housing, and Transport Board, and provided a steer on the LGA's forward lobbying priorities, including: the need for better integration between national infrastructure projects and local transport networks; the importance of the significant road repairs backlog and impact of increasing volumes of traffic on the condition of the highways network; the need to be proactive regarding EU fines for breaches in air quality levels; the importance that learning from pilot areas inform the development of the Buses Bill.

Business Plan

9. The Leadership Board agreed to change the LGA's Business Planning process to bring it in line with the LGA's political cycle and move to a 3-year rolling business plan. As such, they agreed to roll forward the current business plan until September 2016, with the inclusion of one additional priority "Promoting Health and Wellbeing".
10. The Leadership Board has a dual role in monitoring delivery against the current Business Plan, and developing the following year's priorities.
11. Alongside quarterly performance monitoring reports, the monthly Chief Executive's report sets out the LGA's main achievements against the business plan priorities and key corporate indicators, including membership and budget. They enable the Board to hold the Chief Executive to account against the delivery of business plan.

Campaigns/LGA Annual Conference 2016

12. The launch of the Devolution Green Paper formed the central theme of the 2016 Annual Conference in Bournemouth. Work on the other policy priorities – Future Finance, Housing and Planning, and Promoting Health and Wellbeing have been a central plank in the work of the Leadership Board. Members also closely monitored the development of the 2016 Annual Conference programme.

Prioritisation of Bills for the 2016/17 political cycle

13. Following the 2016 Queen's speech, the Leadership Board directed the allocation of LGA resources to focus on a series of priority legislation for local government. The high profile Bills include: Buses Services Bill, Children and Social Work Bill, Education for All Bill, Local Growth and Jobs Bill, Policing and Crime Bill, Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Layden House and Local Government House

14. The Leadership Board continues to oversee the refurbishment projects of both Local Government House, and Layden House, receiving regular updates from LGMB & LGA Properties Company Boards and endorsing a series of enhancements to the proposed refurbishment designs to maximise commercial rent potential.

Pay Policy Statement & the Living Wage

15. The Leadership Board agreed to a revision of section 5 of the LGA's Pay Policy to include a commitment to the UK Living Wage (for staff outside London) and London Living Wage (for staff in London). Furthermore, that the LGA's Pay Policy be reviewed in April 2017.

Commercial Strategy

16. The Leadership Board has maintained regular updates from the Commercial Advisory Board and agreed the LGA's financial strategy until 2018/19.
17. The Leadership Board endorsed the commercial strategy which included current commercial initiatives such as LG Develop, LG Deal, LG Data, as well as 'business-as-usual' service projects, each sitting within the context of LGA's overall commercial objectives.

Membership

18. As of 6 May 2016, the LGA's new membership year - all English councils are members of the LGA, with the exception of:

- 18.1 London Borough of Bromley
- 18.2 London Borough of Barnet
- 18.3 London Borough of Wandsworth

19. Eight members - Seven local authorities and National Parks England have submitted notice to leave LGA membership on 31st March 2017.

Public Affairs and communications

20. The Leadership Board reviewed the programme of activities, events, legislation and announcements throughout the year, through regular reports from the Public Affairs team.
21. The Leadership Board received quarterly performance reports on LGA operations, and an annual perceptions survey of the LGA membership conducted by the communications team. The Board agreed an action plan grounded in this intelligence, that forms the basis of the LGA's media work over the next 12 months.

LGA political balance

22. Following the elections on 5 May, the Leadership Board agreed the new political balance, which forms the basis of the proportionality for the LGA's governance structures for 2016/2017. At the point of calculation the Conservatives were the largest group, retaining the Chairmanship of the Association for the 2016/17 political cycle.

Constitution and governance

23. The Leadership Board agreed to commend to the General Assembly in 2016, a series of amendments to the LGA Constitution and political conventions.
24. The board agreed to commission a member-led review of the LGA Constitution, with any proposals for change made to the General Assembly in July 2017.
25. The Leadership Board agreed to pilot a new Portfolio Holder style governance model from 1 September 2015 in the areas of Resources and Community Wellbeing. At their June meeting, the Leadership Board considered evidence from Community Wellbeing and Resources members, alongside the recommendations of the Governance Task Group, and agreed that the Portfolio model not be continued.

LGA Forward Plan

26. The Board continued to review the Forward Plan of the LGA Executive, Leadership Board and Councillors' Forum on a monthly basis to ensure that their respective programmes continued to reflect the main issues for the LGA and for the sector.

Conclusion

27. The Leadership Board has worked on a wide range of topics and issues during the year. Members are invited to consider any lessons to build into the forward planning and any new ways of working for the Board from 1 September 2016.
28. Today's agenda includes a report on 'future priorities which will enable the Leadership Board in the future to give a stronger policy direction to the work of the LGA.